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Subject: Honolulu Advertiser - Lingle urged to sign off on rail

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Hannemann, 39 state lawmakers call for speedy approval of EIS

By [Sean Hao](#)

Advertiser Staff Writer

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Mayor Mufi Hannemann and a majority of state representatives yesterday pressured Gov. Linda Lingle to expeditiously review and approve the environmental impact statement for the city's planned \$5.3 billion rail transit project.

The city has yet to give the document to Lingle. However, the mayor and 39 of 51 representatives expressed concern about the governor's intent to conduct a thorough review of the project's financial plan and to look into whether alternatives were adequately considered.

Hannemann, during a briefing on the project at the Capitol yesterday, urged a full auditorium to pressure Lingle to quickly review and approve the rail project's environmental impact statement once it's eventually delivered to her.

The 20-mile elevated commuter rail project is the only major "shovel ready" project in the state and will create 4,000 jobs this year, followed by 8,000 jobs next year, 11,000 in 2012 and 17,000 jobs in 2013, Hannemann said.

"Please let our governor know that this is something that we need to do now," Hannemann said. "I have not heard of an alternative project that will bring about the traffic relief or that will create the kind of jobs that we need now. Believe you me, it does not exist. This economy needs it now more than ever."

Yesterday's presentation included remarks from several pro-rail speakers, including Jennifer Goto-Sabas, Sen. Daniel K. Inouye's chief of staff; Don Horner, First Hawaiian Bank board chairman and Hawai'i Business Roundtable executive committee member; and Shaun Ushijima, American Institute of Architects member.

Separately yesterday, 39 state representatives signed a letter to Lingle urging her to promptly review and accept the final environmental impact statement for the rail project. The city needs Lingle's approval before it can proceed with construction of the train project.

The final version of that environmental study was expected to be given to Lingle in December, but has been delayed by an extended federal review. The city has provided Lingle a draft of the study.

Late last month, Lingle said she plans to conduct an independent analysis of the city tax revenue forecasts that are the basis of the project's financial plan. Such an independent review was urged by the Federal Transit Administration in a letter to the city late last year. Last week, however, the FTA downplayed those concerns and pledged \$1.55 billion to help pay for the train.

Lingle has said her decision to have the city's forecasts analyzed was prompted in part by lower-than-anticipated tax revenues, which are needed to pay the city's portion of the project's costs.

Lingle spokesman Russell Pang said yesterday that the governor still plans to conduct a thorough analysis of the project.

"As the governor has said, when she does receive it, she will conduct a thorough review, as required by law, to ensure the final (environmental impact statement) satisfactorily describes all impacts on the environment, economic and social welfare, and cultural practices; incorporates an objective review of opposing alternatives; and responds to each substantive comment received during the draft EIS review process," Pang said in a written statement.

"Her review will also include a complete analysis of the project's financial plan."

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